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Transition Pathways and Democratic Consolidation in Post-Marcos Philippines

TEMARIO C. RIVERA

This article examines the political legacies of the transition process from authoritarian to democratic rule in the Philippines and their impact on the process of democratic consolidation. The consolidation process has been particularly difficult because of a combination of the following factors: a state with weak capacities, a vibrant but contentious civil society, and a slow growth economy that has accentuated class, regional, and religious cleavages. In the post-Marcos era, an outstanding feature of the consolidation process, however, has been the unusual ability of militant social movements to be part of the broader process of democratic incorporation through the electoral party-list system while maintaining their contentious politics of claim-making on behalf of marginalized sectors. This unique feature constitutes an important aspect of the consolidation process that the state needs to address, particularly in the context of its capacity-building efforts.

Introduction

Sixteen years after the restoration of formal democratic rule in the Philippines with the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, the country faces a difficult and contentious process of democratic consolidation. The country continues to contend with armed challenges from a communist-led movement and various Muslim movements, with no easy resolution in sight. In a region that was the world's fastest growing economy before the Asian economic crisis, the Philippine economy has also lagged far behind the major ASEAN countries.

Two presidential turnover elections, normally important indicators of democratic consolidation, took place in 1992 and 1998. However, this process took an unexpected twist in 2001 when a massive people's mobilization, climaxed by the military's withdrawal of support, deposed the elected incumbent President, Joseph Estrada, less than halfway to his six-year term. In turn, Estrada's successor, former Vice-President Gloria Arroyo, barely three months in office, had to quell a violent march on the presidential palace by enraged Estrada supporters from the poorest classes.

The broad features of the problems and challenges of democratic consolidation in the Philippines include a volatile ensemble of the following factors: a cycle of contentious politics in a state with weak capacities and political institutions, a slow-growth economy, and a vibrant but contentious civil society. In this article, three interrelated problems are addressed. First, the historical and social foundations of democratic rule in the country, and the political legacies of the transition process from authoritarian to democratic rule that continue to shape the dynamics of the consolidation process will be addressed. Second, the problems of the consolidation process focusing on the roots and dynamics of contentious politics in the country, particularly the role played by armed movements and militant social movements, will be examined. Third, new forces and players at work in the society in the process of state capability building and democratization will be identified.

The Social and Historical Foundations of Democratic Rule in the Philippines

To understand the complex interaction of state and society which underpins the process of modern democratic rule, one needs to situate this in the colonial context when the beginnings of limited partial elections were first introduced. Elections at the municipal level were introduced at the twilight of Spanish rule in the late nineteenth century but this was a highly restrictive process involving only the local élites. The revolutionary Philippine Republic, established in 1898, also had a system of elected municipal and provincial officials but its operation was cut short by the American colonial occupation. Reflecting the "fusion of expediency and ideals" of the time, the American colonial government introduced a system of regular elections starting at the local levels of government in 1901, members of the national legislature in 1907, and a president during the Commonwealth period to facilitate colonial rule by co-opting the native élites.[1]

The American colonial strategy of gradually putting the native élites into power through electoral contests had the following major

results.[2] By prioritizing the establishment of the institutions of representative electoral democracy, the colonial government legitimized élite rule, further entrenching the power of local élite families who were able to control the electoral process. This preoccupation with electoral democracy not only increased the power of local bosses and provincial lords but also encouraged patronage-driven corruption since the control of public resources became an essential tool for winning elections. Finally, this same preoccupation with electoral democracy undermined the building of autonomous national political institutions, such as the various agencies of the civilian bureaucracy and the police, resulting in a weak and politicized administrative state apparatus.

One crucial long-term consequence of the Spanish and American colonial legacy of a relatively weak central state lies in the existence of a much larger political space for civil society. Institutions such as the highly influential Catholic church, powerful business groups, popular movements ranging from religious communities to political movements, as well as resilient local warlords and political clans, have traditionally enjoyed a large degree of autonomy from state control. This also means that powerful groups in civil society with authoritarian tendencies and partisan, parochial interests have greater leeway to entrench their interests and pursue partisan projects. Finally, while providing a common language and rules among established élites for contesting political power, electoral democracy in the Philippines has not succeeded in fully incorporating the oppositional challenges of dissident élites and mass-based movements, as shown by the persistence of armed movements and the extra-constitutional militancy of various social movements.

In his now classic model of transition to democracy, Rustow identified four phases in the process: developing a sense of national unity; a prolonged struggle over important socio-economic-political issues; a decision phase resulting in the institutionalization of some crucial aspect of democratic procedure; and a habituation phase where both officials and citizens willingly submit to the democratic rules of contestation.[3] Further stressing the importance of national unity as the "background condition of the democratization process" Rustow remarked that: "The hardest struggles in a democracy are those against the birth defects of the political community."[4] Following Rustow's framework, the Philippine democratization project is best described as a colonially rooted installation of formal democratic rules of contestation lacking the initial nourishing environment of a working national unity. Moreover, the predicted prolonged struggle over fundamental issues, including the resolution of deep class, religious, and linguistic-regional cleavages, has not found a reasonable closure. In its most stark form,

this intractable problem resonates in the continuing communist and Muslim armed movements and related contentious collective political struggles. Lacking national unity and failing in effectively addressing the conflict endemic to the birthing process of democratic polities, the habituation phase to the rules and civilities of a democratic order has yet to take root.

Political Legacies of the Transition Process

The almost fifteen years of authoritarian rule by Ferdinand Marcos (1972–86) after five regular national and local elections between 1946 and 1969 dramatized the fragility of democratic rule in the country.[5] Festering structural problems and contentious militant politics provided Marcos a justification to declare martial rule in 1972. Barred by the old constitution from running for a third term, Marcos invoked the extraordinary powers granted by the same constitution to deal with a situation marked increasingly by acute class and ethnic conflicts (particularly in Mindanao), a worsening economic crisis, and the growing challenge of militant popular-based movements mediated primarily through a re-established new Communist Party (CPP) and a new, armed Muslim movement, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Marcos sought to strengthen and centralize state powers in the office of the presidency as the political underpinning for an ambitious project to jump-start economic development through a debt-driven strategy of growth (accessing cheap foreign loans) and crony-control of selected key industries, such as the sugar and coconut industries. Initially successful with the rise of the world prices of agricultural exports in the seventies, the economic strategy proved unsustainable with the massive corruption and plunder of public resources by the Marcos family and its cronies and the eruption of mass opposition to the regime by the eighties. Ironically, the attempt by Marcos to centralize state powers and weaken local power-holders further strengthened both the legal and underground militant civil society movement that facilitated the fall of the dictatorship.

The Philippine transition process saw the actual replacement of the dictatorship by a broadly unified anti-Marcos élite grouping through the combination of a military mutiny and massive civilian resistance.[6] However, the ouster of Marcos was preceded by long years of combined armed resistance and legal struggles that built up the popular infrastructure of massive mobilization. The opposition to authoritarian rule demonstrated the extraordinary vibrancy of a civil society constituency that was never crushed by Marcos. It ranged from the armed struggle waged by the new CPP and the Muslim resistance in the

southern part of the country, the anti-dictatorship activities of significant segments of the clergy from the Catholic, Protestant, and Aglipayan churches, the organizing activities and mobilizations waged by youth and student groups, labour unions and various people's organizations of the urban poor, peasants, women, and professionals such as teachers and lawyers, and dissident media groups.

Martial rule crippled the traditional legal political parties until Marcos sponsored a manipulated election in 1978 to set up a sham Parliament. This initially provided an opening for the traditional élite politicians to reorganize under the leadership of former Senator Benigno Aquino, who was then under detention but led the opposition candidates who ran in the Metro Manila area. It was the assassination of Aquino in Manila on 21 August 1983 upon his return from exile in the United States that triggered the forging of a broad coalition of opposition forces, including both left-wing and moderate forces, and also sparked divisions within the ruling élite.

A key process to the unravelling of authoritarian rule took place with the fracturing of its internal unity when a mutinous faction of the military emerged. Led by graduates of the Philippine Military Academy, this faction, Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), was nurtured by then Defence Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile. In the last years of the regime, Enrile was engaged in a power struggle with a bloc led by Imelda Marcos and General Fabian Ver, Marcos' chief of security and closest military confidant. The RAM elements decried the corruption and lack of professionalism within the military in the escalating war against communist and Muslim rebels. Conspiring to seize power, RAM prepared to launch a coup but this was discovered by General Ver's men. About to be arrested, Enrile and his RAM followers, joined by General Fidel Ramos, then chief of the Philippine Constabulary, seized one of the government military camps where they openly declared their mutiny. This ignited the historic events of 22–25 February 1986 when the confluence of a military mutiny supported by a massive people's mobilization forced Marcos out of power.

One legacy of authoritarian rule and the transition process lies in the politicization of the military, rooted in two sets of experiences: a taste of direct political power when they were assigned as martial law administrators and heads of various government corporations and private firms taken over by Marcos; and the attempt at myth-making as the "nation's saviour-guardian" perpetrated by RAM and like-minded officers based on their role in the February mutiny. As shown by the various coup attempts launched by RAM and other military factions during the Corazon Aquino administration (1986–92), and the ouster of President Estrada in 2001, this continuing mindset poses a problem to democratic consolidation. Ironically, the post-Marcos constitution approved in 1987

provides some kind of a legal leg to this claim as it recognizes the principle that the military is the protector of the people and the state.

The most important features of the transition process that have also conditioned the democratic consolidation efforts in the country include the following. First, a politicized military has shown that the democratic principle of the military's subordination to civilian control has become a contested one. This tendency to intervene in political matters has become more pronounced in conjunctures of contentious politics, such as during the impeachment process of former President Estrada where the functioning of already weak political institutions was further strained by militant and confrontational claims against the government and its leading officials. Secondly, the transition process has neither fully incorporated nor succeeded in negotiating political settlements with the armed movements, both the communist and Muslim-based ones. This means that the protracted armed struggles, while highlighting valid social and economic claims, do sap badly needed resources and also provide dangerous opportunities for the interventionist agenda of ambitious military officers and their civilian allies. Thirdly, authoritarian rule left behind an economy in dire straits with government resources plundered by the Marcos clan and its business cronies, and a society deeply divided by acute class and income inequalities. Fourthly, there is a robust tradition of a vibrant civil society, including social movements, people's organizations, and development-oriented non-government organizations (NGOs), but there are also groups and organizations with authoritarian and anti-democratic tendencies enjoying significant autonomy from the state. Fifthly, the state continues to operate with relatively weak capacities and with political institutions enfeebled by pervasive corruption and lack of professionalism and oftentimes overwhelmed by militant claim-making by civil society groups. Finally, in the transition process and in the consolidation phase, a key external actor, the United States, has played an important role, and its policies will continue to be a defining frame of reference for state policies and initiatives. For instance, the United States, especially under President Ronald Reagan, was a major supporter of Marcos, but in the waning days of the regime it facilitated the dictator's exile to Hawaii to pave the way for the assumption to power of the moderate forces under Corazon Aquino and to pre-empt any radical challenge by the revolutionary forces.

Problems of Democratic Consolidation

The process of democratic consolidation may be seen to be taking place at two levels. At one level, there is the embedding of formal democratic political institutions and procedures that guarantee the rule of law, the

exercise of basic civil and political rights, and fair, competitive elections. At another level, there is the cultivation of a democratic way of life and civic capabilities as nurtured largely by civil society.[7] In more concrete terms, Linz and Stepan specify at least three crucial elements of consolidation:

> Behaviorally, when no significant political groups seek to overthrow the democratic regime or secede from the state. Attitudinally, when democratic procedures and institutions are viewed generally by the populace as the most appropriate means of governing collective life, and there is little support for alternatives. Constitutionally, when political forces become subjected to and habituated to the resolution of conflict within the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.[8]

In the Philippine context, these intertwined processes of building democratic rules and institutions and strengthening democratic values need to be situated within the following defining features. There is a tradition of a state with weak capacities particularly for economic developmental ends.[9] This weak state and its institutions, compromised by pervasive corruption and lack of insulation from powerful vested interest groups have been a major factor for a slow growth economy. In turn, the poorly performing economy has accentuated deep-seated class cleavages and regional-religious divisions, particularly in the southern part of the country. While the country is hobbled by a weak state tradition, there is a robust civil society that has militantly advanced the social and economic interests of the various disadvantaged sectors. However, with its overall weakness and paucity of resources, the state and its institutions find it difficult to address these issues, leading to regular cycles of contentious politics, particularly by social movements that make the regulation of conflict difficult.[10] Thus, contentious politics in a fragile democracy can have contradictory results. By its ability to mobilize and empower disadvantaged sectors, it can enhance democratic governance by enforcing more transparent and accountable ruling procedures. On the other hand, by overwhelming political institutions with oftentimes difficult demands and bypassing institutional frameworks of claim-making and governance, contentious political actions can put under severe stress the minimum conditions of consensus and accommodation necessary for democratic contestation.

The Armed Movements and Negotiated Political Settlements

Consistent with Rustow's counsel that a significant level of national unity is a critical condition for a working democratic order, one of the

first orders of democratic consolidation in the country lies in the political resolution of the continuing armed conflict with the local communist movement and the various Islamic movements. A militarist approach to the armed conflict is neither desirable nor sustainable.[11] In the long run, a sustained process of economic growth and development and a more inclusive politics of accommodation are the best approaches to strengthen the commitment for democratic forms of conflict resolution. In the short run, however, a politically negotiated settlement to the armed conflict is the most practicable approach since political negotiations can be jump-started by favourable political opportunities and the creative initiatives of key players.

Rooted in centuries of peasant struggles, the resilience of the local communist movement in the face of the breakdown of various communist systems and parties abroad, and the general retreat of the communist ideology, clearly suggest that it has a local political constituency whose needs have to be seriously addressed.[12] Drawing from the lessons of past negotiations with both the local communist and Muslim movements, one important factor in seeking a political settlement with the CPP and its allied organizations is the role of an international mediator. As shown by the peace process with the MNLF, the role of a mutually acceptable third party international mediator with political and moral clout to influence the turn of events must be given full play in the negotiations with the communist movement.[13] In the latest phase of the negotiations, Norway has offered and been accepted by both parties as the official host for the talks. With its long experience in hosting and facilitating peace talks, Norway has the prestige and resources to potentially contribute to a favourable outcome.

Two important political developments have emerged to affect the possibilities of a negotiated political settlement with the CPP. The first concerns the declaration by the United States, with the ready acquiescence of the Arroyo government, that the CPP and its guerrilla army, the New People's Army (NPA), are international terrorist organizations, followed up by a call for the freezing of all their foreign-based assets.[14] Coming at a time of escalating armed encounters by both sides but also in a period of renewed vigourous calls for peace negotiations by civil society, the American diktat has strengthened the militarist voices in the administration. However, unless fully backed up by massive American military and financial support, the government is in no position to wage a military offensive in a widened battlefield against both communist and Muslim guerrillas. On a more auspicious note, the 2001 national elections marked a significant decision by the social movements and legal organizations identified with the communist movement to contest the party-list elections.[15] In the context of the

peace process, this successful participation in the electoral contest by the largest organized left forces in the country creates a potential constituency of activists and supporters who may be more sensitive to the viability of electoral struggles and more supportive of the urgency of a politically negotiated settlement with the government. Thus, the political conjuncture has opened up two possibilities: a U.S.-supported military offensive against the armed movements, with enormous social and economic costs, or a resumption of the peace process aiming at a political negotiation with the help of an international third party mediator and popular support from civil society.

Steeped in a long history of struggles against the central government dating back to colonial times, the Muslim armed movements are proving to be quite intractable because they articulate ethnic and religious interests that overlap with material inequalities, further fuelled by state repression. For instance, the provinces dominated by Muslims (Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Basilan) also happen to be the country's worst areas in terms of income, life expectancy, and functional literacy. The Muslim-based armed movements have fractured into three distinct but related organizations (the Moro National Liberation Front, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and the Abu Sayyaf), and thus require a more nuanced political approach appropriate to the particularities of each group.[16] Of the three, the Abu Sayyaf is by far the smallest group but has provoked the fiercest armed encounters because it has thrived on a project of ruthless and spectacular kidnappings. The government decision to accept American military forces in the battle against the Abu Sayyaf has provoked a militant nationalist backlash and once more underscores the difficulty of working out a consensus on fundamental national issues.[17] The MNLF, led by Nur Misuari, entered into a peace agreement with the government in September 1996, and Misuari himself was subsequently elected governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). However, the MNLF has split into two rival camps and Misuari is now in jail, facing rebellion charges as a result of an abortive uprising he instigated against government forces in late 2001. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), an earlier breakaway faction from the MNLF and led by Hashim Salamat, is working out peace negotiations with the government after a massive government military offensive under former President Estrada dismantled its major camps in Mindanao.

In the political settlement between the government and the MNLF, the key political institution that needs to be strengthened is the ARMM. Short of a major revision of the constitution, which could explore the possibility of a federal system, the ARMM is the most practicable regional parliamentary institution for processing many of the legitimate

demands of the MNLF. Unfortunately, the poor performance of Misuari as governor of the ARMM and severe resource constraints have undermined the credibility of this institution and much needs to be done to make it a more effective instrument for addressing urgent socio-economic problems in the region. Through the ARMM, the possibility of producing a new generation of elected Muslim leaders more directly accountable to their constituencies and with more sophisticated governing skills is also enhanced. In the case of the MILF, the need to firm up a peace settlement after a ceasefire agreement in August 2001 has been made extremely urgent by new reports about the financial and military links of the movement with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network and its Southeast Asian affiliate, Jemaah Islamiah.[18] Finally, the government has launched an all-out military offensive against the Abu Sayyaf but this has proven to be costly and difficult. While small and splintered, the Abu Sayyaf enjoys the natural advantages of guerrilla warfare in the area and continuing linkages with various MNLF and MILF units plus the support of traditional kinship networks made easier through its substantial financial resources gained from lucrative kidnapping-for-ransom operations.

The pervasive poverty of a significant segment of the population constitutes another major challenge to democratic consolidation.[19] In their study of 141 countries between 1950 and 1990, Przeworski and his co-researchers stress that the best predictor of democratic survival is the affluence or poverty of a country: "... per capita income is by far the best predictor of the survival of democracies. Democracies survive in affluent societies whatever may be happening to them. They are brittle in poor countries."[20] Consistent with this observation, it is not surprising that the communist guerrillas and Muslim rebels have proven to be most rooted and resilient also in the poorest provinces and regions of the country. In the same manner, the huge numbers of the urban poor in Manila that attacked the presidential palace less than three months after President Arroyo assumed office further dramatizes this problem. However, it is not so much the ferocity and violence of the mobilization that should provoke strategic concern for those committed to state capacity-building and democratization as the urgency of addressing the causes of poverty and slow, highly skewed economic growth. In the same research, Przeworski and his colleagues also argue a critical point that various forms of socio-political unrest (such as strikes, anti-government demonstrations and riots) are not as economically costly in democracies as normally assumed. Moreover, past instabilities, unless in an extreme form, "[have] almost no effect on current economic performance".[21] For instance, the Ramos administration was able to recover from the negative growth rates

provoked by the series of coup attempts during the Aquino period (1986–92) and was even able to post growth rates averaging 5 per cent a year between 1994 and 1997. In addressing problems of democratic consolidation in relatively poorer states, therefore, it is vital that the government worry not so much about militant forms of political mobilization and claim-making as about how to decisively address poverty and economic growth. Very often, contentious forms of politics articulate deep-seated and legitimate economic and social issues, and democratic systems are expected to be more tolerant if not actually protective of such forms of claim-making.

A major issue in the working out of a democratic order in the Philippines concerns the complex relations of conflict and compromise, negotiations and accommodations between state authorities and the vibrant but fragmented civil society. For historical and political reasons briefly described earlier, there exists a dense network of civil society organizations in the country. The most politically significant actors include the highly influential Catholic church, headed by Cardinal Sin, a very political persona in his own right, and various organizations allied with the church; the powerful business groups led by the Makati Business Club, which includes the country's top corporations and other business groupings, such as the Bankers Association of the Philippines (BAP) and the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP); the Iglesia ni Kristo (Church of Christ), a tightly organized and disciplined local church group with a track record of voting as a single bloc for their candidates of choice; the mass media, arguably the freest in the region; the various militant social movements oftentimes incorporating and interfacing with groupings of trade unions, people's organizations, professional organizations, and developmental NGOs operating all over the country and representing a whole range of political and ideological persuasions from left to right; and charismatic religious movements such as El Shaddai and Jesus Is Lord Movement, with significant mass followings and relatively autonomous of their mother churches.

More than the weakly institutionalized mainstream political parties, which come alive only during election campaigns, it is these civil society organizations which have played a more effective role in articulating societal interests, monitoring government performance, and organizing and mobilizing their constituencies for political actions.[22] These organizations have found ways to operate even at the height of martial rule and have been at the forefront of mass mobilizations in the ouster of Marcos and later of Estrada. The continuing challenge for the state is to find creative ways of harnessing their collective dynamism

while respecting their institutional integrities and not falling captive to particularistic programmes espoused by some. Even while there exists many points of contention between the state and these civil society organizations, there are meeting points where co-operation and accommodation have been cultivated.[23]

In the democratic consolidation process in the Philippines, social movements have played an important role. By social movements, we refer to "a sustained challenge to powerholders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those powerholders by means of repeated public displays of that population's numbers, commitment, unity, and worthiness".[24] Due to the weakness of traditional political parties in the Philippines and the wider public space enjoyed by civil society organizations, social movements continue to perform empowering, representational, distributive, ideological, and participatory functions associated with democratization. Even while they have practised a generally contentious form of politics using non-institutionalized and innovative forms of protest, the most militant and ideologically oriented social movements in the post-Marcos Philippines have in fact directly engaged the parliamentary process. This engagement has also taken the form of comprehensive claim-making against the government from within government institutions by the actual running of candidates for elective positions at the local and national levels.

The participation of the country's three most militant social movements, Bayan Muna, Akbayan and Sanlakas, in the party-list system provides an interesting case of how social movements can be incorporated in existing democratic procedures of contestation while at the same time transforming some basic rules of the game and thus contributing further to the democratization process.[25] In the 1998 party-list election, Akbayan and Sanlakas won one seat each in the Lower House. In the 2001 elections, Bayan Muna, in its maiden party-list campaign, won the maximum of three seats allotted to each party while Akbayan retained its single seat. Contesting positions in local government in 2001, Akbayan also elected 18 mayors and 200 councillors. One important outcome of the party-list election in 2001 was a legal case filed by Bayan Muna in the Supreme Court, which resulted in a clearer set of guidelines reserving the party-list system exclusively for the marginalized and under-represented sectors. Moreover, Bayan Muna has also filed a bill in the Lower House that seeks to ban those political parties which already have at least 20 per cent of the membership of the Lower House from participating in the party list. The current ban applies only to the five major political parties. While the current party list system makes it difficult to elect a

critical mass of progressive legislators who can substantially influence the formal law-making process, these reforms by themselves advance the democratic intent and implementation of the party-list law.

While the militant social movements have increasingly made their political presence felt in the formal legislative body through the party-list system, their most important contribution to the democratization process continues to lie in the diverse ways they have organized, empowered, asserted, and expanded the rights of the poor and disadvantaged sectors of society through innovative ways of claim-making. In its myriad forms, there is virtually no process of claim-making against the state and powerholders in Philippine society which has not been initiated by or participated in the various social movements. The issues articulated range from the redistribution of wealth, the espousal of alternative worldviews and value frameworks, the expansion of citizen's rights, and all aspects of governance. What stands out then in the context of democratic consolidation is a society endlessly animated by contentious claim-making on many legitimate issues but with a state bereft of the capacity to address such claims and unable to keep pace with the changing demands of its civil society. With this dominant feature of state–civil society relations, one concrete concern for improving state capacities lies in forging stronger institutionalized political parties that can effectively articulate and aggregate popular and sectoral interests but also bind their constituencies to more practicable ways of addressing conflicting claims.

Institutional Reforms, the Filipino Diaspora and Democratization

There are at least two major institutional reforms which are worth noting in terms of their impact on the strengthening of democratic practices: first, the Local Government Code (LGC) passed in 1991; and second, the party-list system which has become a part of the electoral process since the 1998 elections. The LGC provides a greater allocation of internal revenue collections to local governments, more taxation powers, and financial autonomy. Most significantly, the LGC institutionalizes the participation of civil society organizations in the policy-making process at different levels of local governance. These reforms have served to attract more progressive and competent leaders who challenge the traditional control of local politics by established political clans.[26] Indeed, there have been outstanding cases of new progressive and reform-minded mayors and other local government officials elected under these reforms, but established political clans have also shown an amazing degree of resilience.[27]

Two important observations need to be stressed in assessing the impact of decentralization, particularly in the context of democratization. Decentralization of powers, especially with significant civil society participation, could make the task of strengthening state capacities a more manageable task if done at the local level. This process can help decongest and redirect the avalanche of claim-making directed at the central state agencies to local agencies where transparency and accountability processes could also be monitored more closely. On the other hand, decentralization should not detract from the equally important task of strengthening state central institutions essential to addressing fundamental public needs, including those of public order and security (a professional and constitutionalist military and police), basic education and health, and central taxation agencies.

In the context of democratic consolidation, the party-list system is an electoral institution that allows parties representing the poor and marginalized sectors of society easier access to the legislature. It allocates 20 per cent of the total membership of the Lower House (or 52 seats in the current Lower House) to winning party-list candidates. A party-list organization can win from one to a maximum of three seats, depending on the percentage of votes it gets out of the total votes cast for the party-list candidates (at least 2 per cent for one seat and 6 per cent or more for three seats.) While suffering from several flaws in its conceptualization and practice, the party-list system, nonetheless, is a step in the right direction as it helps cultivate a wider and broader constituency of support for democratic institutional rules and practices. Since the 1998 party-list elections, various social movements and non-traditional parties of marginalized sectors have actively contested the positions and shown that their incorporation into formal democratic rules of contestation can result in the further expansion of democratic rules and spaces. So pronounced has been their political impact, in fact, that their success, particularly in the case of Bayan Muna, has ignited brutal attacks against its organizers and members.[28] However, to be a more effective vehicle for the claim-making of disadvantaged sectors and their parties, there is a need to increase the proportion of seats allocated to the party-list to allow for a balance between legislators representing specific territories through the single-member constituencies and those representing functional and sectoral interests through the party-list.

Finally, the long-term political consequences of the Filipino diaspora on the further consolidation of democracy in the country needs to be examined. The overseas contract worker returnees, many of whom are college-educated, constitute a new and powerful constituency of more competent, confident, multi-skilled individuals who can be

expected to demand more exacting standards from public officials. Some have indeed run for public office or set up small businesses, adding to their sense of empowerment and independence. This potential can be multiplied a thousand times over, given their direct influence on a network of family, friends, and beneficiaries. Even while they are physically separated from political events in the country, they have been able to intervene in various ways through the facilities of modern communications technology and the representations on their behalf of local support networks. For instance, at the height of the mass mobilizations against Estrada, a number of electronic discussion and pressure groups were set up and actively participated in by many Filipino professionals abroad. Indicative not only of their economic impact but of their growing political strength, a new Absentee Voting Law that will allow them to vote while overseas is expected to be approved soon by the legislature. Perhaps, this is one aspect of globalization that may yet energize the democratic process.

NOTES

1. For an excellent discussion of the political and administrative aspects of this process between 1900 and 1913, see Paul D. Hutchcroft, "Colonial Masters, National Politics, and Provincial Lords: Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the American Philippines, 1900–1913", *Journal of Asian Studies 59*, no. 2 (May 2000): 34.
2. For a detailed discussion of this process and its outcomes, see ibid., pp. 277–306.
3. See Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model", *Comparative Politics 3* (1970): 337–63.
4. Ibid., p. 360.
5. For a convenient collection of articles discussing various aspects of the rise and fall of the Marcos dictatorship, see Aurora Javate de Dios, Petronilo Bn. Daroy, and Lorna Kalaw Tirol, eds., *Dictatorship and Revolution: Roots of People's Power* (Metro Manila: Conspectus Foundation, Inc., 1988).
6. A detailed narration and analysis of the politics of the transition process is provided by David Wurfel, "Transition to Political Democracy in the Philippines", in *Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Southern Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia*, edited by Diane Ethier (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1990), pp. 110–35.
7. See Stephen Macedo, "Transitions to What? The Social Foundations of Democratic Citizenship", in *Pathways to Democracy: The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*, edited by James F. Hollifield and Calvin Jillson (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 53–54.
8. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 5–6.
9. To qualify as a democratic developmental state, Adrian Leftwich argues that the primary developmental criterion is an annual average rate of growth in GNP per

capita of at least 4 per cent over a period of twenty-five or thirty years (2000, p. 173). Under this criterion, the Philippines fails to qualify. Leftwich further notes the tension between democracy and development in that consolidated and stabilized democracies oftentimes lose the ability to make decisive policies to transform the fundamental structures of economic and social life necessary for development to take place. See Adrian Leftwich, *States of Development: On the Primacy of Politics in Development* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

10. By "contentious politics", I adopt the framework used by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly when they refer to episodic, public forms of collective struggle usually targetting the government as an object of claim, and especially when innovative forms of collective action (unprecedented or forbidden within the regime) are used. See Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 4–9.
11. For the human and socio-economic costs of the war waged by President Estrada against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2000, see Fermin D. Adriano, "Mindanao: The Making of the Crisis", in *Between Fires: Fifteen Perspectives on the Estrada Crisis*, edited by Amando Doronila (Pasig City and Makati City: Anvil Publishing, Inc. and Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2001), pp. 200–11. Between January 2000 and July 2002, the government admitted losing 750 troops, with another 3,000 wounded in resurgent battles with Muslim rebels and communist guerrillas (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 17 October 2002, online edition).
12. The new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which leads the armed struggle, was established in 1968, but the movement has suffered organizational splits provoked by ideological and political differences generated in part by different responses to the restoration of formal democratic rule in 1986. The main and largest guerrilla units continue to be under the leadership of the CPP.
13. In the peace agreement concluded in 1996 between the Ramos administration and the MNLF led by Nur Misuari, the facilitative and persuasive role of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and one of its leading members, Indonesia, was an important factor in the process.
14. The immediate effect of this order was the freezing of the bank account (with about 1,000 Euros) in the Netherlands of Jose Ma. Sison, exiled founding leader of the re-established Communist Party. The Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Blas Ople, also started a campaign to convince the European states to declare the NDF-CPP and the NPA as terrorist organizations. Subsequently, the European Union included Sison and the New People's Army in its list of international terrorists.
15. In the 2001 elections, the left legal organizations referred to as "national-democratic" and identified with the main communist formation (CPP) set up Bayan Muna, a political party to contest the party-list election. Bayan Muna topped the party-list slate, winning the maximum of three representatives allowed for an organization in the party-list process.
16. The Abu Sayyaf (Bearer or Father of the Sword, in Arabic) traces its roots to the CIA-financed *mujahideens* who fought the Soviets in the Afghan war. The Abu Sayyaf presence in the Philippines was orchestrated by Abdurajak Janjalani, an Afghan war veteran, and his brother Khaddafi. Abdurajak espoused a radical Islamist vision for the Filipino Muslims but this political agenda got sidetracked after his death in 1998 and the Abu Sayyaf has since broken up into autonomous small armed units mainly in the Muslim dominated provinces and islands. For the roots of the Abu Sayyaf, see John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999); and also Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (Quezon

City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, and Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000).

17. Vice-President Teofisto Guingona was critical of American military intervention in the battle against the Muslim rebels and was later pressured to resign from his concurrent position as Secretary of Foreign Affairs.
18. For reports about these linkages, see Maria A. Ressa, "Infiltrating the MILF", *Newsbreak*, 28 October 2002 (online edition).
19. In 1997, when the Asian economic crisis erupted, poverty incidence in the country was at 32 per cent, and between 1985 and 1997, official poverty estimates show that poverty declined by an average of one percentage point a year. This rate of poverty reduction is slower compared with the rates in East Asia and the Pacific as a whole (1.6 percentage point a year). See Arsenio M. Balisacan, "Did the Estrada Administration Benefit the Poor?" in *Fifteen Perspectives on the Estrada Crises*, edited by Amando Doronila (Pasig and Makati City: Anvil Publishing House and Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2001), pp. 98–112.
20. Adam Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 137.
21. Ibid., p. 211.
22. For a source book rich in case studies detailing various aspects of civil society–state relations in policy-making, policy advocacy, and political mobilizations for different causes, see Marlon A. Wui and Ma. Glenda S. Lopez, eds., *State–Civil Society Relations in Policy-Making* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997); and Miriam Coronel Ferrer, ed., *Civil Society Making Civil Society* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997).
23. During each of the post-Marcos administrations, the broad NGO community and people's organizations have shaped important policy debates, influenced policy outcomes, and contributed members to the presidential Cabinet staff. For instance, in the Aquino administration, the organizations and alliances of the urban poor succeeded in pushing for the creation of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor and the passage of the 1992 Urban Development and Housing Act. See Anna Marie A. Karaos, "Urban Governance and Poverty Alleviation in the Philippines," in *Urban Governance and Poverty Alleviation in Southeast Asia*, edited by Emma Porio (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1997), p. 69. During the Ramos and Estrada administrations, the Cabinet positions for the Secretary of Agrarian Reform were filled up by NGO personalities, and during the Arroyo administration, the Secretary for Social Work and Development was assumed by a woman NGO leader.
24. Charles Tilly, "Social Movements as Historically Specific Clusters of Political Performances", *Berkeley Journal of Sociology 38* (1994): 7.
25. Representing various left tendencies, Bayan Muna, Akbayan, and Sanlakas act simultaneously as social movements and party-list organizations. Their core constituencies include labour, peasant, urban poor, women's organizations, and progressive professionals and middle-class elements. Akbayan has the most diverse grouping of left organizations, Sanlakas' core political support is the trade union movement, while Bayan Muna was launched by the "national-democratic" left forces, the biggest organized left movement in the country.
26. The best known case of this new breed of elected local politicians is Mayor Jesse Robredo of Naga City in Southern Luzon, who received the Magsaysay award for public service. For the dynamics of his rise to power, see Takeshi Kawanaka, *Power in a Philippine City* (Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies and Japan External Trade Organization, 2002).

27. The established political clans continue to be dominant, particularly in the provinces with the highest human development indicators (income, health, and education). For instance, from 1946 to 1998, they continued to win and dominate congressional elections in 20 out of the 25 richest provinces. See Temario C. Rivera, "Political Clans and the Philippine State: A Rethinking" (Paper presented at Sophia University, Tokyo, 12 May 2001).
28. In a span of one year, between April 2001 and April 2002, Bayan Muna reported the killing of 17 co-ordinators and members, 6 abductions, and 64 cases of various kinds of human rights violations against its members in various parts of the country.

TEMARIO C. RIVERA is Professor of International Relations at the International Christian University of Tokyo.